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PROGRAM Today in Congress

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SUBSIDIZED VACATIONS AND SCORCHING CRITICISM

JOSEPH MCCAFFREY: "A House Armed Services Subcommittee today voted to give hard-pressed and overworked American spies a subsidized vacation periodically. The Subcommittee approved legislation that would revamp Central Intelligence Agency personnel practices and policies, after a pitch from the Director of the Agency, Richard Helms. One of the bill's key provisions would permit the Agency to send its overseas-based agents someplace to, quote, 'relax.' The bill authorizes such a government paid trip once every two years, or twice in three years.

"Over on the Senate side, the CIA Director himself drew scorching criticism for having written a letter applauding a newspaper editorial, which had attacked Senator J. William Fulbright as crafty. When Helms' letter was published in the St. Louis Globe Democrat yesterday, it voiced the new CIA's chief's pleasure in having read an editorial critical of Fulbright's efforts to bring the CIA under surveillance of his Senate Foreign Relations Committee, or at least some of its members.

"The latest explosion in the CIA dispute came as the Senate published the transcript of that historic Senate session in secret on July 14, when the Senate voted to send the CIA oversight proposal to the Armed Services Committee for expected

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"Senator Eugene McCarthy, the Foreign Relations Committee sponsor of the proposal, called attention today to Helms' letter and called Helms' action entirely out of order. McCarthy's remarks drew expressions of shock and surprise from fellow Senators, including the Major Leader Mike Mansfield.

"And it prompted Fulbright to say that one of the things he wanted his Committee to have a chance to examine was whether the CIA takes part in domestic affairs -- whether, for example, this Agency actually takes part in the elections of unions. The Arkansas Democrat said there had been such reports, and he felt they should be answered, although he said he had never before been willing even to mention them publicly.